Secunderabad and Hyderabad Railway Station is about 30 minutes. Senior officers of the railway are always concerned with the volume of rush at the reservation counters to take remedial measures. In peak season, additional reservation counters are opened to ensure the convenience of the passengers at all important locations.

(e) In the State of Andhra Pradesh two computerised reservation centres have recently been commissioned at Kakinada Port and Dronachalam. These facilities have also been sanctioned for another 8 locations *viz.* Nagarsol, Jangaon, Oornakal, Mehdipatnam, Ouvvada, Sullurpetta, Sattenpalli and Vikarabad.

Advanced weapons and equipments for RPF

983. SHRIMATI SAVITA SHARDA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any proposal to equip the personnel of Railway Protection Force with most advanced weapons in view of the recent incidents of dacoities, loot and killings in trains;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the estimated amount to be spent on the said work and by when it is likely to be completed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) Yes, Sir. It is proposed to equip Railway Protection Force with appropriate weapons like AK-47 and 5.56 milimetre (mm) Rifles (called INSAS) by phasing out the out-dated-wapons like the Bolt Action Rifles.

(b) For the Year 2003-2004,1,000 numbers of 5.56 milimetre (mm) Rifles (called INSAS) and 2,000 numbers of 7.62 milimetre (mm) Self Loding Rifles were procured. Earlier to this also, in view of the increasing duties of Railway Protection Force in trains, light and compact weapons like 9mm Carbines and 9mm Pistols have been provided replacing the old Bolt Action Rifles.

For the year 2004-2005,1,000 numbers of 5.56 milimetre (mm) INSAS Rifles and 500 numbers of 9mm Carbines are being procured.

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) For 2004-2005, new weapons will cost approximately Rs.3.72crores.

Approximately 7,000 AK-47s and 5.56 milimetre (mm) INSAS Rifles as well as 2,000 Carbines have to be inducted further. Total cost is estimated to be 15.55 Crores approximately.

The full induction is likely to be completed within the next 5 years, by 2009-2010.

Railway Travel Agents

†984. SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the State-wise details of Railway Travel Agents and Railway Tourist Agents appointed by Government alongwith the details of the procedure of their selection;

(b) whether Government would grant the benefit of reservation to SC/ ST and regional candidates in the said appointments;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) State-wise number of the agents appointed, so far, and State-wise details of the candidates of reserved categories among them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) to (d) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the Sabha.

Congested railway stations

985. SHRI M.A.M. RAMASWAMY: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of railway stations in the country which are highly congested due to increasing rail passengers, State-wise and zone-wise;

(b) whether Government propose to take steps to decongest these railway stations;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) if not, the reasons therefor;

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.